



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to 2014 at the Women’s Center. While the weather outside has been frightful, inside the Center we have spent the first few months of the semester welcoming a new cohort of volunteers and interns to the student staff. This January, we hosted a morning retreat for the new people, at which some of our returning staff helped out with training and with welcoming the new folks into our Community of Practice. We would like to welcome Vanessa, Lisa, Laura, Syeda, Kate, Gian, Avery, and Reema to the Women’s Center team. They represent the spectrum of semester standings (first year to senior) and a variety of majors, but they all bring a great deal of enthusiasm and openness to their involvement in the day-to-day activities of the Center.

This edition of *Voices* is meant to provide updates on the events we have sponsored so far this year; to celebrate the academic, professional, and programming achievements of the students affiliated with the Center; and to make visible our commitment to, and challenges within, our anti-racist feminist practice. [As I have noted before](#), in the Fall of 2012 the Women’s Center expanded our [working definition of feminism](#) to include a more explicit foregrounding of our parallel work to dismantle racism. In this edition, you will find stories from students of color who are on the front lines of navigating individual and institutional racism on a regular basis. I am grateful to our students for having the courage to speak their truth. I am also thankful for the staff that work to make the Women’s Center a place where students feel they can safely explore these issues and push themselves around their learning edges.

I am also aware that hearing these stories can be difficult; identity and role impact how that manifests. These stories can trigger associations with personal experiences of racism, resistance to understanding our role in perpetuating racist structures, and/or derailing of the discussion. As Student Affairs professionals, we work to create environments where students can thrive academically and personally. We know and work with many faculty who are committed to providing an educational experience worthy of a top-tier institution; and we collaborate with many students who dedicate themselves to various social justice causes and activities. Yet, in spite of our work, commitments, and dedication, we still operate in a world where racism and xenophobia are enacted in our lives regularly.

To that end, I encourage you to read through this newsletter from the perspective of listening and learning. Listen to the challenges to White feminists to examine how racial privilege must be attended to in order to fully address sexism. Learn about opportunities to get involved with programs such as those with Lakota Harden, Sybrina Fulton, and the *I Am Enough Campaign*. I hope as we put this snowy winter behind us that we have ahead of us a season of renewed energy to continue the work of making our community the model for a civil, welcoming, and inclusive educational institution.

Inside this issue:

\$tart \$mart	2
Body Drama: Nancy Redd	2
Spring Calendar	3
LUNAFEST	4
New England Scholars	4
NCCWSL	4
#SolidarityisforWhite Women	5
Sybrina Fulton	6
Lakota Harden	7
I Am Enough: A Liberation Campaign	7
Letter from the Writing Intern	8
Letter from the Editor	9
Photo Credit	10
Support the Women’s Center	11

—Kathleen Holgerson

\$TART \$MART

Over the course of a woman's working life, she has the potential to make \$1.2 million less than a man because of employers' perceptions of gender differences. This difference persists whether these perceptions are outright instances of sexism or underlying institutionalized forms of oppression, and both need to be corrected. This creates something called the "wage gap" in which the average White woman will make \$0.77 for every man's dollar, and it decreases substantially amongst historically disenfranchised groups in America. Start Smart is a program run by the American Association for University Women (AAUW) in which they equip college women with the tools they need to negotiate a fair and equitable salary true to their qualifications and the demands of the job.

This semester Start Smart was run by Kathy Fischer, Associate Director of the Women's Center, and co-facilitated by Ronke Stallings, Associate Director of the African American Cultural Center (AACC). Start Smart was held in the AACC, in order to engage various populations of students, making the program more accessible and visible to everyone. Start Smart trainings inform women about how the wage gap happens, and how to prevent it early on in one's career. This program helps women be aware of the potential drawbacks they can face just for being a woman, and how that can impact future earnings.



Photo Credit

Start Smart discusses how presumptions about a woman's life can impact the way that she is viewed as an asset to the company. It discusses the snowball effect many women face in the workplace: hiring managers may assume a woman will soon become pregnant and request maternity leave; maternity leave leads to her not spending as much time at work; thus, her value in the workplace decreases. Women may not be up for promotions or advancement in the same way, based on these assumptions about their lives and intentions. Start Smart equips participants with the tools to recognize these errors in judgment, giving them the ability to navigate these differences effectively. In this way, women can earn themselves a fair wage in their field, shrinking the gap between men and women. Start Smart is so important because it gives college women a glimpse into the real world, and provides realistic ways of thinking financially and professionally to give women a better, smarter start in their post-graduate career.

The Women's Center is an integral part in helping women on campus in many facets. UConn women are becoming more and more equipped to face the real world thanks to programs like this. Start Smart is one of many ways that we can enhance the knowledge and maximize the skills that UConn women already possess, and make sure their scholarship and ability is translated and respected in the workplace.

—Takina Pollock

BODY DRAMA: NANCY REDD



Photo by: Kathy Fischer

Nancy Redd, Miss Virginia 2003 and final top 10 competitor in Miss America, came to UConn as part of [Eating Disorders Awareness Week](#) in partnership with [SUBOG](#), [I Am Enough: A Liberation Campaign](#), [SHAPE](#), and the [African American Cultural Center](#). Redd didn't come to discuss how to become a beauty queen or why beauty is important; she talked about being real and being honest with yourself. She spoke candidly about her experiences, and how it took seeing herself in a better light and shedding negativity to make a real change for herself.

She shared stories about hurtful things that people said to her, even playfully, and how it affected her in such a painful way. She discussed ex-boyfriends, old friends, and family members who she said minimized her accomplishments and maximized her shortcomings. Nancy Redd repeated "I am enough, you are enough" to the audience, resonating with the on-going campaign at UConn. Redd brought comedy, honesty and truth to the discussion; resounding laughter coming from the crowd echoing that she was very well-received. This former Virginia beauty queen stood before us, in her own words, "very pregnant," beaming, and in love with who she is, a beauty queen still, inwardly and outwardly.

—Takina Pollock

SPRING 2014 CALENDAR

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT WOMEN'S CENTER SPRING 2014 CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 31 **ELECT HER DISCUSSION**
Join us to discuss the upcoming Elections Week and ways that women can get more involved.
Friday, 2:00PM in the Women's Center Room 421G

FEBRUARY

- 2 - 10 **GO RED FOR WOMEN CAMPAIGN**
Stand together on February 14th by wearing red as a public symbol of support. Donations can be made on the facebook group www.goredforwomen.org/wearredday/donate/advocatedonation-form2014.html?kwoAdvocateId=BWJBF90. No donation is too small, \$2-\$5 is perfect, but any amount is appreciated. Stop by the Women's Center in the Student Union, Room 421, to receive a free Go Red pin when you donate.
- 10 **\$TART \$MART TRAINING**
Free workshop, but registration is required by 2/7
Please register at www.surveymonkey.com/s/STARTSMART2014
Co-sponsored by AACC
Monday, 6:00PM-9:00PM in the African American Cultural Center Room 207
- 14 **MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA-PART 1**
Friday, 12:00PM in the Women's Center Room 421G
- 24 - 28 **EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK**
Body positive information and giveaways
Co-sponsored with SHAPE and Active Minds
Daily, 11:00AM-1:00PM in the Student Union Lobby
- 24 **MISS REPRESENTATION**
Co-sponsored with SUBOG, SHAPE, and Active Minds
Monday, 4:00PM in the Women's Center Room 421G
- 25 **BODY EMPOWERMENT WITH CAROLINE ROTHSTEIN**
Co-sponsored with SHAPE, SUBOG, and Active Minds
Tuesday, 7:00PM in the Student Union Theatre
- 26 **BODY DRAMA WITH NANCY REDD**
Co-sponsored with SUBOG, SHAPE, AACC and Active Minds
Wednesday, 7:00PM in the Student Union Theatre
- 27 **PIZZA AND CONVERSATION AMONG WOMEN VETERANS**
Please RSVP to Nikki.Cole@uconn.edu by Thursday, Feb. 13th, and indicate any dietary restrictions/preferences so we can order the appropriate amount/kind of pizza.
More information available at: <http://veterans.uconn.edu/>
Thursday, 12:00PM - 1:30PM, in the Women's Center Room 421G
- 28 **SYBRINA FULTON**
African American Cultural Center's 45th Anniversary
Black and Gold celebration event
Co-sponsored by WRAAP
Friday, 6:00PM-8:00PM in the Student Union Ballroom

MARCH

- 4 **LAKOTA HARDEN**
Tuesday, 6:00PM in the Student Union Theatre
- 5 **UNLEARNING RACISM WITH LAKOTA HARDEN**
Wednesday, 11:00AM-1:00PM in the Women's Center Room 421G
- 14 **MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA-PART 2**
Friday, 12:00PM in the Women's Center Room 421G

APRIL

- 11 **MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA-PART 3**
Friday, 12:00PM in the Women's Center room 421G
- 15 **LUNAFEST-TWO SCREENINGS**
12:00 PM and 5:00PM in the Student Union Theatre
- 30 **TAKE BACK THE NIGHT**
7:00PM in the Student Union Theatre

MAY

- 9 **ANNUAL OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS CEREMONY**
Co-sponsored with the Provost's Office and the UConn Alumni Association.
Friday 4:00PM-6:00PM in the Alumni Center Great Hall
- 15 **UConn WOMEN'S ADVANCE: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE**
Watch for registration materials in the mail by early April.
Thursday, 8:30AM - 4:30PM in the Student Union Ballroom

ONGOING GROUPS

BETWEEN WOMEN

A discussion group for women who love women... or think they might. Come and discuss fun topics, movies and more with women who share your feelings and experiences.
Every Monday, 7:00PM, at the Women's Center.
First meeting - 1/27.
For more information contact BetweenWomen@uconn.edu

STRONGER

"I've lost myself." "What is a healthy relationship?" "How do I get strong after an abusive relationship?" "How do I heal from sexual assault or abuse?"
Stronger is a support and discussion group for UConn women who are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking.
For more information and to register, Jaime Kaplan at 860-486-4705 or Jaime.Kaplan@uconn.edu or Megan LeBlond at 860-456-3595 or mleblond@snet.net
This is an open group held on Thursdays from 3:30PM - 5:00PM in the Women's Center Conference Room.



University of Connecticut Women's Center
Student Union, 4th Floor, Room 421
2110 Hillside Road, Unit 3118, Storrs, CT 06269-3118
Fax: 860-486-1104 Email: womenscenter@uconn.edu

Location is wheelchair accessible.
Additional accommodations available upon request.
For more information contact the Women's Center at 860-486-4738.

—Natalie Sequeira

LUNAFEST

The Women's Center is preparing to host their annual [LUNAFEST](#) Film Festival. LUNAFEST is shown across the country, featuring films that are by and about women. This year, films range from animation, to live action, and depict stories of love, determination, and activism. Some of LUNAFEST's featured films are "[Date with Fate](#)" by Venetia Taylor, "[Sound Shadows](#)" by Julie Engaas, "[Tiny Miny Magic](#)" by Danielle Lurie, and "[Maria of Many](#)" by Alexandra Liveris. Lisa Vickers and Kat Montero have been working hard at making this year's program a success. Apart from the actual films, there will be popcorn served at the door, as well as the chance to win great door prizes! Fifteen percent of the profits will benefit the [Breast Cancer Fund](#), while eighty-five percent of the proceeds will go to the Women's Center, which will help fund programming efforts, scholarships, students to attend professional conferences, and other needs of students at the Women's Center. As both are great causes, we encourage as many attendees as possible!

Please join us on Tuesday, April 15th at 12:00PM, or at our evening showing, beginning at 5:00PM, all taking place in the Student Union Theatre. Tickets can be purchased for \$7 for faculty, staff, and community members, and \$5 for students, if purchased during our presale. Tickets purchased at the door will be \$10 for faculty, staff, and community members and \$7 for students. Tickets will be available online three weeks before the festival, and in the Women's Center, as well as at the actual event. Come enjoy [LUNAFEST](#) with us!



—Kat Montero & Lisa Vickers

NEW ENGLAND SCHOLARS



BOAG

The Women's Center would like to congratulate our student employees Syeda Haider, Rachel Stewart, and Lisa Vickers, who are all recipients of the distinguished 2013 New England Scholar Award!

NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR COLLEGE WOMEN STUDENT LEADERS

The National Conference for College Women Student Leaders ([NCCWSL](#)) is a conference sponsored by the American Association for University Women ([AAUW](#)) and the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators ([NASPA](#)). For the past few years, students from UConn have attended and are enlightened by the different workshops and opportunities presented at the conference. For example, I attended NCCWSL 2013 and went to a workshop discussing future careers in Higher Education Student Affairs. We were told about a fellows program as part of NASPA. I attended the workshop and subsequently applied for the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP) and got it! If it weren't for my attendance at NCCWSL I wouldn't have encountered the opportunity. Conferences like these are great for a student's professional development; their focus on college women and our ability to succeed as a fact, not merely a possibility, is a standout quality about NCCWSL. If you are a current student and have any interest in attending, or are a supporter interested in contributing to sending a student, please contact the Women's Center (860-486-4738) for further information!



—Takina Pollock

#SOLIDARITYISFORWHITEWOMEN

Takina Pollock and Syeda Haider, both writers for Voices discussed #SolidarityisforWhiteWomen, a hashtag that popped up on Twitter when Mikki Kendall (@Karynthia), a popular Black feminist, used it to describe the difficulties women of color (WOC) face in feminist spheres. The hashtag raised a lot of eyebrows, and a lot of great discussion, across the internet. Takina and Syeda, who both self-identify as WOC, explored the idea of #SolidarityisforWhiteWomen using their own experiences, unpacking what it means to truly explore intersectionality in feminism, and how oftentimes it doesn't happen.

Takina: Sometimes I feel like feminism isn't a safe space for me. I think a lot of feminism is reserved for the elite and for those who have access to seats around the table. A lot of the time those seats are all filled by White faces sharing the same goals and passing around a pitcher of "White Whine" any time a WOC has a comment. It's like the first wave of feminism where upper middle class White women wanted to be able to work, meanwhile they have women in lower classes who've been working virtually their whole lives. I think too many White feminists don't examine their privilege enough, even when they think they "get it". I think, as feminists, we all have to be open to our differences, and okay with getting things wrong at times. We have to be willing to give sincere apologies, and able to make better choices in the future. But a lot of the time White women can afford to leave WOC out of the conversation because they don't see an inherent *need* for us to speak, even though we may have different needs/desires than the majority of the group. It's frustrating being a WOC and having people who know nothing about my experiences always speak for me.



Syeda: And that's where we circle back to solidarity - we recognize how important it is to not have voices left out of the conversation. That's why you and I can identify as feminists, and not necessarily have to recourse to terms that are upfront-inclusive of our racialized identities as well, like "womanist." But that becomes more and more difficult when White women consistently push us out of mainstream discourse. I know you and I were talking about this article in the *Nation* - "Feminism's Toxic Twitter Wars" - where the author disparages feminists calling out other feminists for problematic behaviors they engage in as "bullying" - so much of that entire article was code for being upset with WOC, especially Black feminists, for calling White feminists out for being exclusionary, and dare I say it, racist. We both talked about the quotes: "It's okay to be racist, but it's not okay to be called a racist" and "I assure you: racism is worse than being called a racist." A lot of this is about hurt feelings - but we can't afford to care about hurting your feelings if you refuse to hear and/or dismiss us. Feminism is about being there for your sisters - and if you're implying that Black female sexuality is dangerous ([hi Tina Fey](#)) or that Muslim women should go to prison for wearing hijab ([sup Ann Coulter](#)), you're not here for those of us that have been cudged in the name of whiteness.

Takina: I had a professor in a Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies course, in a discussion about feminism, say that feminism doesn't *need* to be intersectional. I remember sitting in that class, fuming because this concept that



#SolidarityisforWhiteWomen was being reinforced in a classroom. I didn't agree with this offhand comment, because the intersections of oppression are very real. It's frustrating when the absence of WOC is condoned by a scholar on the issue at my own institution. There are so many people of color's (POC) voices left out of conversations about feminism and what it means so the overarching message becomes a very White agenda. I think there are parts of myself and my culture that are under/misrepresented in the wide scope of feminism; and in identifying as a Black feminist, I have to view intersectionality not only from my own lens, but from other WOC's lenses as well. I think #SolidarityisforWhiteWomen because whenever any WOC's feminism gets "too loud" we're characterized as being irrational, unreasonable, hateful, and exclusionary, but White feminism can be whatever it wants to be, and it will be lauded with praise. For these reasons, and so many more, I am unapologetically a *Black* feminist.

Continued on the next page

#SOLIDARITYISFORWHITEWOMEN

Syeda: I'm all for solidarity - I know there are few more potent ways to bring about change than through collective organizing, and I'm here for "unity," but that unity is meaningless until, and unless, it includes all of us. I can't continue reading articles about Femen standing up against the exploitation of Muslim women anymore - I can't even click on them, honestly. It's worse because I know there is real, intense misogyny to be fought within the other two communities I belong to (Pakistani and Muslim), and I spend inordinate amounts of my time talking about that, too, but rarely do I allow non-Muslims to speak about those injustices - not because I think it's less important than sexism in American society, but because I know full well how often "save the women!" rhetoric has been used to justify further racism (in the form of othering, discrimination, and violence) against Black and Brown Muslim societies. I can't afford to fight the good fight on one front, and simultaneously see that fight applied in ways that perpetuate racism. The important thing is to give voices to the women in the communities - if you want to help Muslim women, then let them speak! Include them in your discussions on power and privilege - otherwise, your solidarity means nothing.

YOUR LIBERATION LOOKS DIFFERENT
THAN MINE,



I PROMISE NOT TO BE A
JERK ABOUT IT.

Beyond Black & White

Takina: A lot of the time WOC's voices are left out of conversations about slut-shaming. There are such different experiences for WOC experiencing street-harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual assault that are often left unaddressed. There was another hashtag that circulated around Twitter called #FastTailedGirls that discussed how Black girls are often sexualized and have vastly different experiences and treatment as it pertains to child molestation. It discussed how young Black girls are often blamed for their own sexualization and how the difficulty in reporting is rooted in the culture from a very young age. It talked about how being seen as a #FastTailedGirl is the worst thing to be called in a Black family, making whatever sexual abuse that happens to a Black girl her own fault, whether she's six or sixteen. This is something White girls are dealing with as well, which gets much more publicity and recognition than any #FastTailedGirls I've ever heard about. In my opinion sexual assault is in the mainstream is only valid when it happens to someone who is not a POC.

—Takina Pollock

SYBRINA FULTON

Sybrina Fulton is the mother of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, a teen slain in Florida by George Zimmerman, who was found not guilty of murder charges, according to Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. Fulton visited UConn on February 28th, 2014 two years and two days after the fatal shooting, as the keynote speaker for the African American Cultural Center's 45th Anniversary, and in celebration of Black History Month.

Fulton stood at the podium without a prepared speech, without notes, just with what was in her heart and fond memories of Trayvon. She spoke eloquently, and honestly, to an audience filled with people who watched and grieved two years ago as this tragedy unfolded in the news across the nation. Fulton thanked student-activists in the room. She said students in Florida had begun rallying in support of Trayvon, and because of their action this case gained national attention. She highlighted why it is so important that students continue to do the hard work that we do, because we can make a change. Through student-activist organizing Fulton found access to a national platform, and she travels the country thanking students for our love and support of her family and her son.

Fulton is one parent of an unfortunately large, and growing number of parents whose children have been murdered in a similar fashion; their murderers protected by the "Stand Your Ground" law. Fulton has turned her grief into action, travelling the country, sharing her story, and working against this law which disproportionately affects Black youth. UConn is extremely grateful to have had Sybrina Fulton share in our celebration of the AACC and Black History month, and thanks her for her advice and grace.

—Takina Pollock



Photo by: Takina Pollock

LAKOTA HARDEN

Lakota Harden, a gifted orator, with the ability to relate to different generations, cultures, and across all different spans of audiences, visited UConn on Tuesday, March 4th as part of the opening of Women's Herstory Month. Students came out to hear Harden speak about her experiences as an activist and community organizer among many other things she has done and continues to do. Harden, Brave Hearted Woman Award recipient in 2003 and 2004 Sisters of Fire Award recipient, talks about deconstructing racism, sexism and other social oppressions.

Students, Brittany Carrier and Erica Jessen attended the movie screening by Harden, which covered racial justice in a way not typically seen. Brittany thought it was “cool because this movie talks about the hard navigation of wanting racial justice, but wanting support and empowering folks from your community.” The movie follows the main character, Toui, a college-educated Mexican American man who takes a road trip with his uneducated brother, and all of the issues they face together. One part that struck Brittany and Erica was when they picked up an African American woman who his brother was extremely rude to. The woman says “I am not a bitch, I am a woman, I am your mother, your sister, your aunt, your daughter.” Brittany and Erica both note the power and purpose of the line, but Brittany feels women shouldn't be diminished solely to their relationships to others to be validated. These conversations are increasingly important to bring to the Women's Center and look at things through multiple lenses. Harden's movie effectively communicated and displayed the intersectionality of oppression.



SFGate

—Takina Pollock

I AM ENOUGH: A LIBERATION CAMPAIGN

I Am Enough: A Liberation Campaign is about bringing together Huskies from all walks of life to discuss societal norms. It discusses topics like hair, masculinity and media literacy, while maintaining a constant theme focused on self-love. Where different standards come from, why they persist, and why they are a harmful misrepresentation of most people is at the core of this campaign. At the forefront of the conversation are elements about why participants are “enough” just as they are, and do not need to fit into unrealistic ideals. This campaign, brought to campus by UConn Residential Life in partnership with the Women's Center, is about being inclusive and culturally-sensitive to differences, standards, and roles allowing for participants to redefine those things for themselves as individuals.



Graphic Designed by Natalie Sequeira

I Am Enough: A Liberation Campaign kicked off on February 11th, in the Puerto Rican Latin American Cultural Center with the first workshop *Hairology*. It focused on the issues and hang-ups that many people face surrounding hair. The program started off discussing Eurocentrism, defining it as “viewing the world from a European-centered perspective, with White as the norm and everything else an offset” and how, while that is typically accepted as the standard, many people don't fit that mold. We discussed Eurocentrism as a spectrum, with

stereotypically White traits on the favorable end, and stereotypically Black traits on the unfavorable end, with other groups falling in the middle of the spectrum, often perceived as “exotic.” The program went on to discuss the concept of “good” hair, using Chris Rock's documentary *Good Hair* as a platform: Afros, kinky, curly hair indicative of Black people is seen as “bad” hair in the media, leaving women of color with the challenge to make their hair as close to White media representations as possible. *Hairology* talked about what “professional” hair looks like, which is often as tame as possible, forcing people with long hair to make it not “distracting” and a laborious effort to assure it's not “too big.” *Hairology* sought to touch on hair as an important part of identity, and not something that people have to minimize or feel ashamed of, regardless of how they choose to wear/not wear their hair. The *I Am Enough Campaign* is about giving people the tools to understand the world around them from a different lens. This campaign promotes questioning social norms while providing everyone with the agency to seek change for themselves, and be an effective ally. *I Am Enough* works cohesively with the Women's Center's commitment to an [anti-racist feminist mission](#). Explicitly including anti-racist language, promoting inclusivity, and openly recognizing intersectionality at the core of these programs.

—Takina Pollock

LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN

Syeda Haider is a second-semester senior majoring in Political Science and Anthropology, and minoring in Human Rights. She is a Writing Intern at the UConn Women's Center and an undergraduate tutor at the UConn Writing Center, and also President of the Pakistani Community at UConn (PCUC). When not working, studying, or writing, Syeda likes to hang out on the Internet.

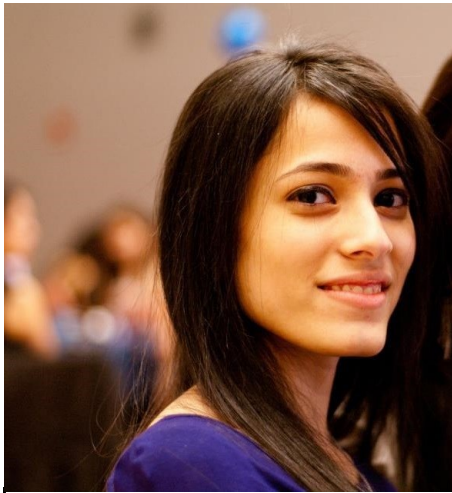


Photo by: Priya Kumar

So, I began this internship in a last-ditch attempt at attempting to finish my Human Rights minor. I knew I wanted to work at the Women's Center – I hadn't been involved much before, but I knew it to be a place of warmth and safety. I'd often go to the Women's Center library to finish up homework, and reveled in knowing that here, at least, I didn't have to worry about expectations or validation, and that the books surrounding me were here for me, regardless of which identity I chose to align myself with on that particular day.

My experience at the University of Connecticut has not been one that is inclusive of all of those identities, and perhaps the one that has been most fraught is my feminism, particularly as it relates to my Pakistani and Muslim identities. The following anecdote is indicative of the environment on campus, particularly when it comes to making sense of those peripheral spaces:

In a Middle East class that I was required to take last semester, my White professor plaintively asked us, "Do you guys think it's possible to be a Muslim and a feminist? Or do you think that's an oxymoron?" I'm sure she didn't intend to be callous – perhaps she was speaking to her environment, to the legions of white college students who apparently couldn't rise out of their stereotypes enough to conceptualize 'Islam' and 'feminism' in the same sentence. Regardless, my hand shot up: "I mean, it's not that hard...?"

The best weapon, I have learned, is articulation. It's the easiest thing to let frustration and anger spill out of you – but that won't win you any fights. It's a lesson I've learned both through attempting to tackle sexism in Muslim communities, and racism in white America's institutions. Only because I had somehow acquired the ability to explain could I provide a perspective that my professor and my classmates had likely not been privy to. I wouldn't have been able to learn this were it not for my role models – each one a feminist, a woman of color, and a Muslim. I didn't grow up reading Audre Lorde or bell hooks, but I was lucky to have stumbled upon the writings of other women ([Ayesha Siddiqi](#), [Nahida S. Nisa](#), and blogger [Kawrage](#)), who, while certainly not household names, introduced me to feminism and intersectionality. I wasn't participating in the conversations of these women myself, but hearing their voices provided me with an education which I was not receiving from other mainstream outlets.

It was through these women that I learned that the misogyny and sexism I had experienced growing up in a conservative Pakistani community was not endemic to my religion; it was, like most sexism and misogyny, constructed and pervasive across generations and across genders. I had been *taught* that it was inherent of my religion to control and police women, through texts and dogma created and perpetuated in patriarchal societies. Internalized misogyny is a strong monster to fight, but I had luckily found women who provided me with the knowledge necessary to assert myself.

The Women's Center has done much of the same. Coming here I have found people with different backgrounds and experiences who are whole-heartedly and sincerely willing to *listen*. Whether I'm sitting in discussions of gender equity at staff meetings, or at events like the Sybrina Fulton talk, or even just hanging out at the student office, the Center is a place where I can indulge in my feminism. There is very little assumption-making that occurs in the Center, and the warmth I felt in the quiet of the library is here as well, except it's perhaps more powerful because it's in the encouragement and acceptance of my co-workers.

—Syeda Haider

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am now a senior here at UConn. I've been here for three years and more and more I'm realizing the need to inform incoming and current students about this institution from the perspective of someone who went here. Overall my experience has been positive. In my time at UConn I've formed relationships that I'm sure I'll have for a lifetime, I've learned a lot about myself and the world around me, I've come to understand the world in a different way; there are so many great things about my time at UConn. But like most things— there is room for improvement. The more informed I become, the more I recognize glaring problems the University needs to address.

More times than I care to recount have I, or someone else, had experiences where they felt marginalized, or completely offended by something that was said or happened on campus. Of course, in the “real world” people are going to say offensive things, and we won't necessarily have the agency to speak against it - but - in a place where we all pay the same amount to be, and work equally as hard, we should all feel equally as safe and of value. I've had a class where an extremely racist video involving domestic violence was shown without explanation or offering of a trigger warning. I mentioned earlier in the newsletter I had a professor tell my class feminism doesn't have to concern itself with other forms of oppression. I've had math and science professors who were extremely dismissive and callous, despite my hard work, leading me to have to retake both of those courses; in hindsight I wondered if it had anything to do with me being a woman, or if they treat everyone poorly. I've had coworkers openly display anti-Black and anti-woman sentiments. There are so many times where I feel inclusivity wasn't a second thought, and there is so much lost in that.

Being a student here, it's frustrating seeing our university branded as “diverse.” It's one thing to have the physical bodies of people of color on campus, but it's another to make sure that everyone has an equitable experience and doesn't have to face othering on a regular basis. I think diversity and inclusion should be something we focus on at the root of our education, not just as an extra-curricular. We shouldn't have to face being told we're only at UConn because of our skin color, because students seem to be increasingly ignorant and indignant about Affirmative Action. We shouldn't have to feel like we're all just tokens, and as though the only safe spaces we have are the cultural centers. If I could offer advice to a future or current student here, it would be to stand up against those injustices, no matter how seemingly small.

I think alongside educating students, professors and other professional staff need to be educated as well. I think diversity and inclusion isn't something we can gloss over in order to say we have it, but something that's understood as affecting students' experiences and student success. There are programs in place that try to buffer that, but I think if UConn is going to claim diversity - it needs to be pervasive. Students argue that issues concerning people of color, marginalized groups, etc. are irrelevant, often when they're not a part of that group, and it's left unchallenged. I can't sit in the Science of Food and argue irrelevance, no matter how I feel about it, if I want to graduate. I think open dialogue about the importance and history of marginalized groups often happens in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies courses, African American Studies courses, and a lot of Human Rights and Social Science subjects. The issue there, is that the people enrolled in these classes typically have a preexisting interest. The same people are learning all about something the whole school needs to know. Diversity, inclusivity, and social justice are things that one comes across at UConn when they seek it out, and there are the same voices that feel empowered to speak up, leaving so many unheard, and many more not understanding.

I think student experience is something that is lost in broad conversation about and within the University, particularly as it pertains to branding our school as “diverse.” Cultural centers don't make UConn diverse. They help with retention, and building community, but they do not make this school the pinnacle of diversity. I think a common misconception I would like to relay to other Huskies is that more students of color than last year, without support or changes in the frameworks of the institution isn't diverse. I challenge everyone in the UConn community to reexamine policies and other programs as they exist to make a real change in the future.



Photo by: Brian Burns

—Takina Pollock

PHOTO CREDIT



<http://www.aauw.org/2012/04/05/confessions-of-a-facilitator/>



Kathy Fischer



<http://www.lunafest.org>



http://boagcodes.org/?page_id=769



<http://www.nccwsl.org>



<http://www.beyondblacwhite.com/solidarityisforwhitewomen-change-feminism/>



<http://groupthink.jezebel.com/tag/solidarity-is-for-white-women>

YOUR LIBERATION LOOKS DIFFERENT THAN MINE,



I PROMISE NOT TO BE A JERK ABOUT IT.

<http://im-a-kit-tycat.tumblr.com/post/50185943784/your-liberation-looks-different-than-mine-i>



Takina Pollock



<http://blog.sfgate.com/incontracosta/2011/03/10/sisters-in-solidarity-event-set-for-saturday/>



Natalie Sequeira



Priya Kumar



Brian Burns

WOMEN'S CENTER



SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTER EDUCATION | ADVOCACY | SUPPORT | GENDER EQUITY

The University of Connecticut's Women's Center is committed to our work with students, staff, and faculty in an effort to promote gender equity on campus. Our efforts are spread widely throughout the University community and support all aspects of the University's mission of teaching, research, and service. We are a key contributor to the University's priorities of student success; distinctions in research; philanthropy; promoting excellence, and progressing in our values of civility and diversity. While we are proud of our successes, we need your help to support and enhance this work.

Dear Friends of the Women's Center:

As you consider donating to the University, we would like to encourage you to contribute to the Center in recognition of continued student work at UConn. Your gift can ensure that major activities can continue to exist and address areas of priority around gender equity, and pave the way for further progress.

Your gift can support:

- *Student participation in a variety of extracurricular academic experiences, such as regional and national conferences*
- *The Women of Color Recognition award*
- *The 100 Years of Women Scholarship*
- *Summer Orientation facilitators/peer educators from VAWPP engaging incoming students in discussions around consent, prevention, and bystander empowerment*

For more information on ways to support the Women's Center, please visit our giving page at <http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/about/donate.php>

Or, visit the [UConn Foundation's giving site](#), select "other" under Purpose and include one of the following designations:

Women's Center: #20447 or 100 Years of Women Scholarship: #30231

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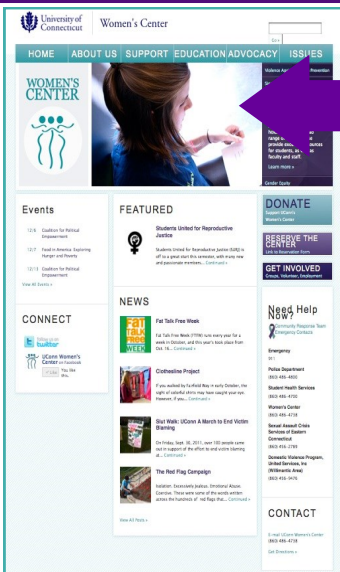
Domestic Violence Program,
United Services, Inc
(860) 456-9476 - Willimantic Area

Sexual Assault Crisis Services of
Eastern Connecticut
456-2789

Women's Center
(860) 486-4738

Student Health Services
(860) 486-4700

University Police
911 or (860) 456-4500 (for routine calls)



Don't forget to check out our website!
<http://www.womenscenter.uconn.edu/>

We welcome you to visit UConn's Women's Center!
We are located at:
Student Union, Room 421
2110 Hillside Road, Unit 3118
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3118
(860) 486-4738
www.womenscenter.uconn.edu
Hours: 8am-9pm, Monday through Thursday;
8am-5pm on Fridays

